

SUPPORTING AND ENHANCING THE ABILITY OF DCPS TO FOCUS ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Across the country, successful school reform has been supported by stakeholders in a variety of partnerships built around specific shared goals. Business communities, universities, foundations, and community members have formed alliances such as the Boston Compact, Hawaii's P-20 Initiative, and Arizona's P-20 Continuum to strategically align public and private resources with efforts to improve the academic performance of public school students. The key to their effective collaborations has been their ability to adopt a common agenda and focus on critical strategies that, if done well, have high impact on student achievement. Their unifying characteristic is their belief that learning is a lifelong process and that education is everybody's business.

The District of Columbia has a rich civic culture, and many corporations, universities, foundations, and local organizations are eager to participate in education reform. The desire and willingness to serve is clear, but in order to facilitate participation and maximize desired outcomes, the District of Columbia needs a structure or initiative that enables stakeholders to collaborate strategically.

The Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education has identified the P-20 (pre-kindergarten through post-graduate) structure as an exemplary model for supporting the Mayor's vision for educational reform and student success. The P-20 model provides the opportunity to strategically align public and private efforts for improving educational achievement for all students, ensuring that all sectors play a critical role in that work.

STRATEGIES & PARTNERS

The Mayor's proposed reform priorities for the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) identified six broad goals – an agenda for moving school reform in the District of Columbia forward.¹ The agenda is extensive and will require the involvement of the entire city – universities, corporations, foundations, think tanks, non-profit organizations, community groups, parents, and formal public education structures. In order to accelerate progress towards the identified goals, non-public organizations that choose to work with the District of Columbia on school reform will be asked to focus on the established agenda in developing their initiatives and to be strategic in coordinating their efforts with other entities doing similar or related work. While the reform priorities primarily focus on K-12 education, the Administration realizes that in order to maximize the time students spend in the K-12 system, they must be prepared to enter school and have appropriate supports in place for when they exit. Non-public efforts

¹ DCPS Reform Priorities of the Fenty Administration, <http://edreform.dc.gov/edreform/Lib/edreform/pdf/academicplan022307.pdf>.

related to early-childhood and post-secondary education will also be encouraged to align with defined priorities in those areas.

During the first 100 days, the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education convened dozens of meetings with multiple organizations working across the education continuum, including early childhood education and care, secondary education, adult education, special education, and before- and after-school programs. These meetings have included colleges and universities, community-based organizations, foundations, think tanks, businesses, and trade and labor organizations. The Administration understands the need to tap into the wealth of human and fiscal capital across all sectors of the city, including the deep resources of students and their families. The focus to this point has been on developing a comprehensive picture of what private resources exist and communicating the message about the importance of aligning these resources against a unified vision.

The task of organizing the contributions of the District of Columbia's nonpublic organizations is a specialized service in and of itself. The District of Columbia Education Compact (DCEC) has endeavored to fulfill the task of managing cross sector collaborations aimed at improving student achievement here in the District. As DCEC transitions into new leadership and considers a P-20 structure, the Administration will work with them and others to determine the best way to leverage their work with student achievement.

NEXT STEPS

- Continue discussions with DCEC about developing a strategy for community partnerships guided by the P-20 model.
- Engage sector partners around specific educational opportunities and develop program proposals for consideration by the Mayor and DCPS Chancellor.
- Develop an operational plan that defines the need for private support with respect to each of the goals outlined in the Mayor's DCPS reform initiatives.